

Remarks to the Home Builders Association of Greater Columbia in Columbia, South Carolina

March 5, 1992

Thank you very, very much, Carroll. Thank you all so much. What a nice welcome back to South Carolina. Thank you very, very much. It's great to be here. To Richard Sandler, congratulations on you and Carolyn's 26th wedding anniversary. The man knows timing. Timing is everything in life. And Governor Campbell, my dear friend Carroll, thank you for that generous introduction. We are grateful for your hospitality, for your leadership as one of America's greatest Governors.

Carroll mentioned the Governors' conference where we set these national education goals, a first. Wasn't just Republican Governors, wasn't just Democrats, all coming together to set national education goals that led to a program that will revolutionize our education. What he didn't tell you is he and only two or three others, maybe it was three, were the true leaders in designing this brandnew approach to revolutionizing education in America and bringing us into a competitive scheme for the next century. We are going to again be the leaders in education, and your Governor has been in the forefront of that change. And I am very, very proud that Carroll Campbell will serve as the national cochairman of my campaign, and once again, he's handling a lot of duties as the southern regional chairman.

Good morning to the other members on the dais here, Chuck Newman, Mike McMichael, and Dottie Lafitte-Woolston. America still remembers your strength, the strength and resilience shown by South Carolina during Hurricane Hugo. I promise not to be quite that windy today. *[Laughter]* It's great to be back in this State where political victory is in the air. And then it'll be on to the fall where already there's a battle shaping up. Both sides will go on the offensive and all out. And in the end, there will only be one winner. And I don't know if it'll be the Gamecocks or the Tigers, but you can bet there's a battle. *[Laughter]*

We were riding in from the airport here, I saw a guy with a Tigers T-shirt on. So

I picked up the loudspeaker from the car there and said, "Go Clemson!" Carroll said, "Say Gamecocks! Say Gamecocks!" *[Laughter]* And so never forgets the politics.

And I'm going to ask everybody what today I ask of you: Help me—what we've started—help me move our country forward. Help me win the Presidency for 4 more years. And I ask your support for the simplest reason. I believe we believe in the same things: jobs, family, peace, world peace, the important things. And we know that taxes are too high because our Government is too big and spends too much. And we believe in faith and family, responsibility and respect, community and country, a strong defense and a strong economy. And we know that we put America first when we put America's families first.

So often politicians do the easy things, the popular things. But it is the tough things that tell you something about character and honor and leadership. Anyone can demagog, but the Presidents must make decisions. And so, let me tell you what has guided me as I've tried to do for America what is right and true.

I learned, and I expect we all did, I learned a great deal when I was young from the greatest teachers I ever had, and that was my parents. And at church and in dinner and in political talks with my mom and my dad, I learned that life means nothing without fidelity to principles. It's what I believed as a Navy pilot in World War II, as a businessman, and now as your President. It's why, for example, I've vetoed 26 bills, standing up against the Democratic Congress. And I'm proud to say not one single one of them was overridden. Sometimes you have to make the tough call.

Some of them were popular, but all, in my view, were ill-advised. And the Presidency is not a popularity contest. I think you elect a President to say what America needs to hear, even when it's not what people want to hear. In the campaign you hear all kinds of quick fixes, all kinds of

political rhetoric, but a President must make decisions and lead.

And Carroll Campbell knows exactly what I'm talking about. And so does that great favorite son of South Carolina, Strom Thurmond. Like me, they believe in these eternal truths that don't change. And so did another South Carolinian, a good man from Columbia, Lee Atwater, my dear friend.

All of us know how values guide each of us every day of every year. It's true in your families; it's true in mine. It's these things that have helped bring America to a new world, a new era in our history. Carroll touched on it.

We've got a lot to be grateful for. The cold war is over, and America won. The Soviet Union collapsed, and imperial communism is a four-letter word, D-E-A-D, dead. I salute my predecessor, Ronald Reagan. American leadership changed the world. Republican leadership will change America.

We believe that parents, not the Government, should make the decisions that matter in life. Parents, not Government, should choose their children's schools. I believe in school choice. And parents, not the Government, should choose who cares for their children. Parents know better than some bureaucrat in Washington, DC, and that's why we fought for a child care bill that has choice as its fundamental practice. And yes, I still believe that there is a place for voluntary prayer in our children's classrooms. And when things aren't right, we've got to change them.

We've got to reform America's health care system. And right now the quality, the quality of American health care, is the best in the entire world, bar none. And the problem? The problem is access to care. Too many Americans, many with families, do not have health insurance coverage. And you know how even a short stay in the hospital can rip a hole right through a family's budget.

But socialized medicine is not the answer. If we wanted long lines and revolving-door health care, we'd put doctors to work down at the department of motor vehicles. You can go there every single day and get those long lines and revolving people coming in and out of there. Nationalized health care

would be a national disaster, it really would. And the last thing we want is the Government playing doctor. We've got to reform, and so our program says make insurance accessible to all, rich and poor alike. And that's the program that we need to bring health care to those who don't have it adequately now in our country.

And we've got to reform our country's legal system. The home of the free has become the land of the lawsuit. When you're as likely to serve your neighbor a subpoena as a cup of coffee, something is wrong. Medical malpractice suits, they've become an epidemic worse than many of the diseases. And we've got to turn this mess around, and we need to spend more time helping one another than suing one another. And that's why we've sent up there to the Capitol Hill a reform bill, a major reform bill to curtail needless lawsuits and give people easier ways to solve disputes out of court. Your industry depends on partnership. And if you'll join hands with me to pass legal reform, we can get this country moving in the right direction.

And we've got to reform our welfare system, make a connection between welfare and work. And yes, we're a compassionate country. We care. Americans care. And they will support welfare for families in need. But Americans want to see government at every level work together to track down the deadbeat dads, the ones who can't be bothered to pay child support. They want to see us somehow break this cycle, this pessimistic cycle of dependency that destroys dignity and passes down poverty from one generation to another generation and then to another generation. That's wrong. That's cruel. And we're working to change it right now. We're encouraging the States to innovate with workfare, with plans that help people break welfare dependency and begin learning, begin learning work skills.

This brings me, then, to what I'm sure we would all agree is the number one issue: the economy and how we change it. We must help people worried about providing for their families, meeting the challenges of paying the bills and providing a home and

setting aside for retirement.

So, let me take a page from Richard Sandler's book and tell it like it is. My program will put America back to work. My State of the Union Message put forth a two-part plan that will get our economy running the way Richard Petty likes to move. My plan says: U.S. economy, start your engines. And when we carry out this plan, it's going to carry our competitive American workers and businesses all the way to the victory lane.

The first part of the plan, some of you are familiar with it, aims to get business growing right now. I want an investment tax allowance, speed up depreciation. I want Congress to quit punishing people who create jobs, and thus, I want to see a cut on the capital gains tax and get this country back to work.

And then there's the proposal that can help get the housing market going again. I'm feeling better about it, but it needs this: a \$5,000 tax credit for first-time homebuyers, money that will help people buy a first home. And here's what that credit, that \$5,000 credit will mean to South Carolina: 3,400 housing starts, 6,600 jobs. And if Congress passes my plan, the National Association of Home Builders predicts 415,000 new construction industry jobs and \$20 billion, \$20 billion in new economy activity across America.

My plan will help people like the Greater Columbia Home Builders sell and build homes. And for the family looking to buy that first home, that \$5,000 credit means 8 months of mortgage payments on the average South Carolina home. I wish Congress, if they don't do anything else, I wish they would lay aside the politics of tax-and-spend and give that one break to the American economy and watch homebuilding lead out of this slow economic time.

Sadly, the liberal crowd that controls Congress doesn't seem to understand the things that matter to you: your home, your business, taking care of your kids. And otherwise last week's House Democrats wouldn't have passed a bill which reminds me of the old joke: It'll make builders sleep like babies. They'll wake up every hour and cry. [Laughter]

Listen to the deal: 25 cents a day in tem-

porary tax relief for 2 years, paid for by a large permanent tax increase. Over in the Senate, the bill the Democrats are working on is not much better than the one in the House. And its centerpiece is, yes, you guessed it, a huge tax increase. And the last thing our economy needs now is a \$100 billion tax hike.

We drew a line in the sand in the Persian Gulf, and we kept our words. And I'm going to draw another line in the sand right now. If the Democrats send me a monstrosity like the House bill, I will veto that bill the minute it hits my desk and send it right back to those people on Capitol Hill.

Our plan has two parts. And I also call on Congress to pass the second part of our economic plan, now. I stressed this in the State of the Union: short-term, quick, done by March 20th; and a longer term, but I want it passed now, things like education reform, support for enhanced research and development so we'll be competitive in the years ahead, a \$500 tax deduction to strengthen the family for each child.

We must make America more competitive in the 21st century, helping us lead economically abroad so that we can succeed economically at home. And some, of course, don't want us to lead. They want to build a fence around America. Tell that to South Carolina. Here are an estimated 125,000 trade-related jobs. And by closing our borders as my opponents would, we'd put those people out of work. And the U.S. trying to build prosperity by turning its back on the world is like your trying to build prosperity without hammers and nails. Call it protectionism or isolationism, both mean surrender. And look closely. That is not the American flag they're waving; it's the white flag of surrender. And that is not the America that you or I know. We are going to stay engaged. We are going to sell abroad.

And of course, the playing field has to be level. Fair trade is the priority. My fight to open trade markets is paying off for America's farmers and manufacturers. Our overall trade imbalance is down. Still got a ways to go. Still need more access to foreign markets. But look at these figures. In 1988, the trade deficit stood at \$119 billion. Today,

it's dropped to \$66 billion, a 44-percent drop. And I will continue to fight hard to open up markets for our exports all around the world. And that's the way to fight for South Carolina jobs and for South Carolina families.

Recently, Barbara and I saw a movie based on a book in South Carolina. I'm sure many of you saw it, "The Prince of Tides," where the author writes, "the southern way of the spirit." The southern way of the spirit, to me, the southern spirit is optimistic. It is confident. It is so clearly patriotic. And you never run this country down. You don't believe in the politics of hate, either. And I think you'd agree that sometimes it's important to talk a little about what is right in America, and there is plenty to talk about.

Let's talk for just a minute about the bravest and best young men and women in America, the volunteer guardsmen and reservists, the volunteer soldiers, sailors, and airmen who answered the call in Desert Storm. South Carolina's young men and women answered that call by the thousands. Their service told America and the world: Never will America tuck tail and let aggression stand. And we'll do what's right and good. And when we do so, we will prevail.

Now, of course, there were those who didn't support us then, and there are those who second-guess us now. But not you. When our kids laid it all on the line, those brave young men and women laid it all on the line, the people of South Carolina never wavered. And again, I want to thank South Carolinians for showing America at its best. The country came together in victory. And that spirit of optimism, that can-do spirit, must be our spirit as we lead this country out of the economic doldrums and into a prosperity, the likes of which we never would have seen.

And now in our fight to change America, we still have much to do. But I am absolutely confident we'll get the job done. And

yes, we have challenges before us. But I guarantee you we'll meet them head on, each and every one. And yes, there's a big election here on Saturday. And I don't like to see this many people gathered together without mentioning it. [Laughter] And there's another one in November. And I don't want to come across as arrogant, but I believe I'm going to win. I believe I'm going to win the election on Saturday. I believe I'm going to win the election in the fall.

And I ask for your support to help keep our party strong and united. I want to be your President for 4 more years. I will try my level-best to continue to lead this country with honor, with decency, with respect for the principles that all of us hold dear.

Barbara and I are very, very privileged, and we know it. Every single day we live in that White House, we know that we are amongst the most privileged in the world to be able to serve in this way. I'm going to continue to try my hardest. I'm going to continue to do my level-best for the people of this country. I ask for your support.

Thank you, and may God bless the greatest country on the face of the Earth. Thank you very much.

[At this point, Richard Sendler presented the President with an oversized hammer.]

Thank you all very, very much. I'll take this and flee and bring it to bear next week on the Congress. Thanks a lot.

Note: The President spoke at 10:37 a.m. at the South Carolina State Fair Grounds. In his remarks, he referred to Richard Sendler, president of the South Carolina Home Builders Association; Charles Newman, first vice president of the Home Builders Association of Greater Columbia; Mike McMichael, president of the Home Builders Association of South Carolina; and Dottie Lafitte-Woolston, BUILD-PAC trustee.